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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, July 13, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "TROUBLESOME INSECTS OF THE HOUR." Information from the Food and Drug Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Today, our correspondent with the Food and Drug Administration calls our attention to the "loud and troublesome insects of the hour."

"I try," she writes, "to give all insects their due, to remember that more sensitive souls than I have discovered virtues in the wing-ed creatures that flit through the air in the summer time. Sang the poet: 'I saw a flie within a beade of amber cleanly buried.' But my only reaction to that beautiful bit of poetry," admits our calloused correspondent, "is that I wish all flies were cleanly buried -- whether in beads of amber or in fine drops of a poisonous spray, does not matter.

"All flies are anathema to me," she continues, "the biting stable fly, the true house fly, the 'lesser house fly,' the black blowflies, the blue-bottles, and the green-bottles. Their habits are indescribably bad. These insects are not only annoying; they are actually dangerous to health, because they carry disease germs to exposed foods.

"As you will recall," she continues, "from a recent report on moth-control preparations, the Food and Drug Administration has charge of enforcing the federal Insecticide Act. This Act protects you against misbranded and adulterated insecticides, fungicides, and disinfectants entering interstate commerce, or offered for importation into the country. According to the federal authorities, effective insecticides, properly used, will almost entirely eliminate the ravages of household insects. However, the average householder does not understand the use of insecticides. For instance, it is a common belief that the mere odor of a fly spray will kill a fly.

"It is not surprising that many people believe this fallacy, for many products on the market have been grossly mislabeled; for example, fly sprays recommended to be used outdoors. Such misleading claims result in great loss to the user, a waste of the money spent for the product, and lack of protection from damage.

"The other day," still quoting our Washington reporter, "I called on the Food and Drug Administration and asked for information about commercial fly sprays -- what they are made of, and how they should be used.

"Here's what I learned. Some of the most popular fly sprays are made of pyrethrum in a carrier of mineral oil similar to kerosene. Usually these sprays contain some perfume. Although mineral oil-pyrethrum products are

commonly referred to as 'fly sprays,' they are often recommended for use against a number of other household insects, including mosquitoes, roaches, bedbugs, ants, and clothes moths. They are 'contact' sprays, that is, in order to be effective they must actually hit the insects to be killed. And since different insects have different habits and life cycles, directions on the labels of these sprays should vary accordingly.

"For example, suppose you are using a mineral oil-pyrethrum spray to kill flies and mosquitoes. Directions on the label should warn you to close all doors and windows, to thoroughly spray all parts of the room, particularly toward the ceiling, and to fill the room with a fine mist. Leave the room closed for 10 or 15 minutes, and then sweep up and destroy the fallen insects. It is very important that you do destroy the insects, because some of them will be only paralyzed, and will later recover, and go on about their business of annoying you. Incidentally, preparations of this type, applied to the face and hands, have some effect in repelling mosquitoes for a short time. So much for the use of sprays on flies and mosquitoes.

"Now, suppose you want to use the spray on ants, roaches, or bedbugs. Then you should force the spray into all parts of the room. Pay special attention to cracks and crevices, and hit as many of the insects as possible. For the control of bedbugs, thoroughly spray the bed, all tufts and seams in the mattress, and all places in the room where the bugs may be hiding. The label on any mineral oil-pyrethrum spray recommended for ants, roaches, and bedbugs, should give directions for repeating the treatment as often as may be necessary.

"For clothes moths, the directions should provide for cleaning all articles to be protected, then spraying thoroughly, paying particular attention to seams and folds. Unless you intend to store the articles immediately after treatment, in moth-tight containers, you should repeat the spraying at least once a month.

"Now, a word about unwarranted claims. According to the Food and Drug Administration, mineral oil-pyrethrum sprays are of no value in disinfecting, and will not prevent disease. They cannot be relied upon to repel mosquitoes, when used in the open, as on the porch or about camps. They are not effective against all household insects. They cannot be relied upon to control any insect that cannot be reached by the spray. This applies also to the eggs, which are often placed where they cannot be reached by the spray.

"Remember, also, when you plan to use an insect spray, that products of this type are injurious, under certain conditions, to both man and animals. Therefore their labels must not bear such unqualified claims as 'non-poisonous,' 'non-injurious,' or 'harmless to man and animals.'

"Still another word of caution. Kerosene, of course, is inflammable, and fly sprays containing it should not be used in the presence of open flames.

"Another thing to remember is that mineral oil-pyrethrum sprays, if exposed too long to the light of the sun, in ordinary glass bottles, may lose much of their efficiency, due to the decomposition of the active ingredients.

"Finally, choose your insect-preparations with care, read the labels, and follow directions."

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